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Environmental Blueprint

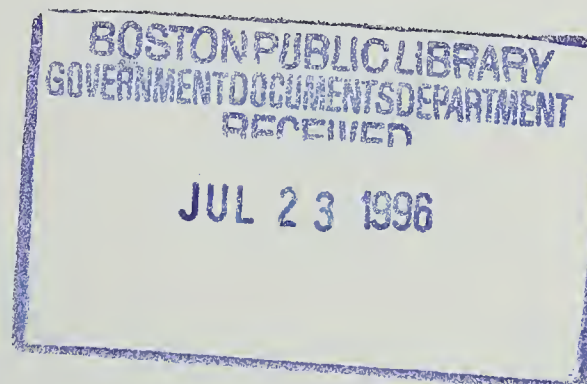
for

Boston

And

Action Agenda

1995



Thomas M. Menino
Mayor
City of Boston

Cathleen Douglas Stone
Chief
Environmental Services

A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL MISSION FOR THE CITIZENS OF BOSTON

Evident in my Mayoral goals for 1995 is the importance of a safe, clean, green and sustainable environment in Boston. The environment encompasses a broad set of aspirations; it can refer to clean air and water, well cared for parks and beaches, the preservation of natural and built spaces, and sensible ways to handle trash, wastes, graffiti and other products of our increasingly complex society.

The City of Boston is blessed with an abundance of resources -- for instance, on a per capita basis we have more parkland than any other major American city. Such wealth requires that we carefully consider our responsibilities as we move into the 21st Century. It is for these reasons that I have created within the Mayor's Cabinet a position, Chief of Environmental Services, whose specific responsibility it will be to address these important issues.

This Environmental Blueprint for Boston sets forth an ambitious agenda and plan for the city and its neighborhoods for the coming years. It will be clear from reading it that we will need your support and active participation in the future to accomplish its goals. I look forward to working with you to make Boston an environmentally aware and friendly city.

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston

Mayor Thomas M. Menino appointed me in September 1994 to implement his vision for an environmentally progressive city. The mission of the Environmental Services secretariat is to coordinate several city departments and programs to ensure the sustenance, protection and enhancement of Boston's urban environment; including its systems of parks and open spaces, its natural and historic resources, and its transportation networks.

The Departments in my secretariat have come together to deliver this document, an Environmental Blueprint for Boston and Action Agenda for 1995. It summarizes the city's environmental projects for 1995 and the underlying thinking which guides those actions. The Action Agenda will be reviewed and renewed annually on Earth Day.

At a time when the Boston area is experiencing changes in its economic and social make-up, we have to learn how to better manage our resources. The necessity of involving all our citizens in this challenge and harnessing the area's intellectual and technical knowledge cannot be over emphasized. I look forward to forming creative partnerships with all of you -- citizens, non-profits, abutting communities, and federal and state agencies, so we can work toward accomplishing existing programs as well as establishing new priorities. This Blueprint is a step in that direction.

Cathleen Douglas Stone
Chief of Environmental Services



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HIGHLIGHTS

Annual \$250,000 land acquisition allocation from the City's capital budget for matching funds.

Trust for Public Land offers \$2 million as financing for land acquisition.

City of Boston support for Audubon Nature Preserve at Boston State Hospital site in Mattapan.

Aquaculture Project to investigate viability of locating fish farms in Boston.

Revitalization of Gardner Street Landfill in West Roxbury.

Support for Neponset and East Boston Greenways to the Harbor projects with the Boston Natural Areas Fund and the Trust for Public Land.

First ever Boston automotive materials recycling event on April 22, 1995.

Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the completion of the Emerald Necklace.

Support for Boston Greenspace Alliance's Boston School Yards Initiative to enhance outdoor facilities for Boston's children.

"Garden Futures" collaborative program for community gardens sustainability.

Kick-off city-wide Boston Main Streets Program and distribution of Exploring Boston's Neighborhood Brochures.

Sustainable Boston Conference 1995 to be held this Fall.

Environmental Blueprint for Boston

AN ENVIRONMENTAL VISION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

These environmental policy goals are based on past accomplishments, but also look forward to the future. With the near-complete rehabilitation of the city's park system, the realization of the Harborwalk concept, and with the ongoing effort to improve the water quality of Boston Harbor and its tributary rivers, Boston must now broaden its aspirations for a safer, cleaner and more vibrant urban environment.

The Environmental Services cabinet will use this Blueprint as the means to initiate a process with citizens to develop a new environmental policy to steer Boston toward the next century. It is the first step in a year long dialogue. We need your response to this document and your continuing participation in this process.

The city must nurture both its economy and its environment in an interactive, complementary fashion. Cleaner waters, greener streets and parks, purer air, healthier natural ecosystems: this environmental development will result in a new vision for Boston. Nature must be an integral part of urban development, complemented by Boston's achievements in architecture and urban design. Enhancing the livability and quality of life in Boston's neighborhood and downtown environments will go hand-in-hand with improving their economic vitality. Such balanced development, both economic and environmental, will continue to put Boston at competitive advantage as a place to live and work.

This policy also emphasizes the need to enhance the physical resources and the operational systems which maintain the health of the urban environment. These goals stress the roles of open space and historic preservation as catalysts for economic development and as a central means of conserving natural and cultural resources of the city. The importance of clear-cut leadership to coordinate the use and management of Boston's environmental systems is emphasized.

Similarly, an equitable distribution of environmental goods and services for every community and neighborhood helps assure the overall health and quality of life in the city. Underserved communities will receive special attention as the city strives to improve overall quality of life and health throughout all neighborhoods.

The following statements of principles and policies establish an initial framework to begin this process.

Environmental Blueprint for Boston

Partnerships and the Economics of the Environment

Within a larger economic context, budgets for various environmental protection resources and projects have historically fluctuated with the cyclical nature of the public budgeting process. To minimize the effects of these boom and bust cycles, advocacy and active participation by the public must be consistent and coordinated. A variety of partnerships and volunteer programs on neighborhood, city-wide, and corporate levels shall continue to be developed in order to supplement and support annual budgetary allowances. A menu of alternative sources of income will be sought which will maintain the integrity and insure access to parkland and facilities.

The City's current acquisition policy has been through the development review process. Wherever possible the City has used zoning, design review and conservation restrictions to increase the open space in the city while allowing development to proceed. The City will adopt an **acquisition policy** which will expand the open space inventory under its care, custody and control to: protect existing natural and cultural resources; restore missing links in the open space system; respond to the demand for facilities; and protect scenic easements and establish buffer zones. Acquisition of a proposed property will be considered only when there is a demonstrated community need, an environmental and open space analysis indicates its inclusion in the city system, and a financial strategy provides for its long-term stewardship and maintenance. Environmental Services will evaluate on a yearly basis, acquisition opportunities throughout the city based on the acquisition policy, and establish an yearly capital match appropriation for open space acquisition.

Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Revitalization

Boston is distinct among American cities because of its collection of single-and multi-family dwellings historic commercial buildings, as well as religious properties, schools, and other institutions, and historic parks that make up virtually all our neighborhoods and enhance the quality of life in the city. The City will seek to protect and improve its neighborhoods--for people who live, work, and visit Boston. As the City's preservation planning and regulatory agency, the Boston Landmarks Commission and Historic District Commissions will continue to preserve historic resources through designation and design review and will participate in the City's decision-making for planning and development programs and projects to ensure that the historic character of our environment--that draws people to Boston--is protected for future generations.

Environmental Blueprint for Boston

Environmental Justice Concerns

A key priority for Environmental Services will be emphasizing environmental justice to provide an equitable distribution of enforcement resources to all of Boston's neighborhoods. In the past, certain communities have borne a disproportionate burden of environmental harms. Under Environmental Services, the equitable distribution of regulation enforcement efforts will be pursued to ensure that significant environmental and health hazards are removed from all communities.

The work and operational and regulatory capacities of all concerned departments will be coordinated to achieve the maximum effect from available resources in order to enforce health, sanitary, and safety standards. The departments will work with community groups to prioritize enforcement actions and develop creative remedies and training programs with the ultimate objective of making each neighborhood free from environmentally hazardous actions by individuals, families and businesses.

Coordination and Maintenance of all Open Space

The Environmental Services Secretariat, as responsible for the improvement of the city's environment, can provide the coordinating function to assure a coherent open space system. All public open space shall be coordinated in such a way as to maximize the benefits for the community-at-large. While the citizens of Boston continue to enjoy clean, safe and actively used parks, the city will seek to expand the meaning of public open space — to encompass such resources as boulevards, medians, streetscapes, greenways, urban wilds, community gardens, cemeteries, and the waterfront. The Parks and Recreation Department will develop a practical, field-based definition of a consistent “standard of maintenance” and will work with others to make use of operating and capital funds.

Equitable Access and Environmental Education

Parks and open spaces, the city's natural resources, beaches, and other features can provide enjoyment for everyone. Physical design, programming, and regulations have been and will continue to be used to protect and encourage universal access for all of Boston's residents and visitors.

Environmental education is seen as an "all-ages" activity. Schoolchildren are particularly receptive to the message that a clean environment is achievable by individual action. Adults, through interpretive programming, persuasion, and enforcement can also pick up the message. The city will work toward creating educational programs aimed at promoting the safe and appropriate public use of Boston's environmental resources.

Action Agenda for 1995

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS: AN ACTION AGENDA FOR 1995

Introduction

This Action Agenda identifies the projects and programs that are either underway or proposed for this year. These new initiatives address the key environmental concerns and opportunities that Boston faces today.

This agenda begins the realization of the Environmental Blueprint: Making Boston's neighborhoods cleaner; reaching out to its residents to provide renewed access to its rich natural resources; and ensuring the protection of the environment while complementing the economic development process. Central to making this agenda happen is an effort to establish lasting partnerships with residents and advocacy groups, federal and state agencies, as well as with the non-profit and private sectors.

In addition to ensuring the continuing implementation of current projects, Environmental Services is gearing up to identify priorities and projects for the future. Two efforts will initiate that task:

Sustainable Boston Conference 1995: This event, to be held this fall, will bring together professionals and activists in the field; residents; students and academics; as well as public leaders to debate Boston's environmental priorities for the next century.

Enhancement of the professional staff's effectiveness through partnerships with organizations like the Environmental Business Council, University of Massachusetts, the New England Aquarium, Boston Natural Areas Fund and other groups.

Making Boston's Neighborhoods Cleaner and Safer:

Clean Cities Commission: Enhancing the visual environment at key city gateways and thoroughfares will be its mission when appointed this spring.

Vacant Land Inventory Management: Developing programs to identify and manage city-owned vacant land.

Boston School Yards Initiative: Redesigning and creating maintenance strategies for school yards to enhance outdoor facilities for Boston's children.

"Red Shirts" Projects: Targeting the Boston Youth Conservation Corps activities toward urban wilds and other environmentally significant sites for environmental education and for clean-ups this summer.

"Grassroots": Working with communities to convert abandoned lots into non-profit owned community gardens and open spaces.

Action Agenda for 1995

Pursuing Environmental Justice in Boston's Neighborhoods:

- Boston Environmental Strike Team: Coordinating efforts of all city departments whose authority impacts the environment, enforcing local and state environmental and health regulations against environmental violators in Boston's neighborhoods.
- Legislative Reform: Supporting House Bills 2307 and 2213 to enhance the city's ability to identify absentee/out-of-state landlords hiding from their legal responsibility to keep their properties clean and safe.
- H.E.A.T. Initiative: Continuing and stepping up the Inspectional Services Department's program to identify slumlords and chronic offenders through the Housing Enforcement Awareness Team.
- Project Pride: Eliminating drug houses in Boston through the Public Facilities Department's program to board-up abandoned buildings and prevent illegal trespassing and use.
- Boston Brownfields: Remediating former industrial sites in Boston's neighborhoods through the initiation of an EPA grant proposal.
- Integrated Pest Management: Evaluating and controlling use of pesticides in several public schools and housing facilities, and developing strategies for reduction of pests and pesticides through the initiation of an EPA grant proposal.

Building Partnerships to Invest in the Future of the Environment:

- Trust for Public Land: Utilizing TPL's offer of a minimum of \$2 million as financing for land acquisition including their purchase of \$1 million in real estate on the Neponset this year.
- Neponset and East Boston Greenways to the Harbor: Working with the Boston Natural Areas Fund and the Trust for Public Land to implement their \$883,000 grant.
- Audubon Nature Preserve at Boston State Hospital Site: Supporting Audubon's effort to create a \$2.3 million Conservation/Gardening Center for environmental education in the city.
- Bridging the Emerald Necklace: Rehabilitating bridges and their landscapes in the Necklace through a \$900,000 state grant secured by a joint effort of Boston and Brookline.
- Boston Urban Environment Fellows: Partnering Environmental Services and the University of Massachusetts to create fellowships for urban environmental issues.
- Gardens Futures: Funding partnerships between foundations and City agencies to develop a plan for sustainability of non-profit owned community gardens.

Enhancing the Enjoyment of and Access to Boston's Natural Resources:

- "Back to the Beaches": Educating residents that the harbor beaches are back, through a campaign managed jointly by the Boston Harbor Association and the MDC, improvement projects include renovation of Carson Beach Bathhouse and sand replenishment at various beaches.
 - NPS Harbor Islands Project: Working with the National Park Service, state agencies, harbor groups, and federal elected officials toward a new management plan for the Islands.
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Action Agenda for 1995

Aquaculture Project: Initiating a pilot project to investigate the viability of fish production in an urban setting to determine if fish farms could be located in Boston.

Gardner Street Landfill, West Roxbury: Developing a long-range plan to revitalize the landfill for public access and use, as well as to protect natural habitats on the site.

Increasing the Efficiency of Transportation Systems in Boston:

Downtown Transportation Study: Analyzing downtown Boston's pedestrian ways and streets to recommend more efficient networks and programs for the moving of goods and people.

Alternative Fuel Vehicles: Investigating the feasibility of converting the city's fleet to alternative fuels.

Harbor Transportation: Supporting ongoing studies to reexamine water shuttle routes and terminal options to encourage harbor transportation in Boston.

Urban Ring: Contributing to the implementation of the Urban Ring concept by the integration of open space and pedestrian networks with the proposed public transportation routes.

Rationalizing the Economic Burdens of Environmental Improvements:

Land Acquisition: Allocating \$250,000 from the City's capital budget toward the acquisition of open space supported by an annual evaluation of available sites.

Stabilization of Water and Sewer Rates: Stabilizing water and sewer rates by BWSC's prudent fiscal management of its capital projects and maintenance activities, and through federal and state assistance.

Zoning Initiatives: Strengthening of existing, and introducing new, zoning legislation to protect the environment from the negative impacts of economic development.

Management of Inventory: Optimizing the expenditure of capital dollars to renovate city parks and open spaces by developing a system of annual reviews of multi-year projections.

Minimize Construction Impacts and Ensure Mitigation for CA/T Project:

Beginning meetings with interested, affected, and concerned parties through the operation of :

Joint CA/T Project Issues Committee: Coordinating and effectively resolving issues to assure the efficient progress of the project through a committee of senior city and state officials.

Open Space Management Task Force: Addressing future management and maintenance of parkland to be created from the CA/T Project by the joint city-state appointment of a task force.

Cultural Resources Committee: Mitigating impacts on historic buildings along the corridor through continuing review by the Boston Landmarks Commission, Massachusetts Historical Commission, and CA/T Project conservator.

Action Agenda for 1995

Preserving Boston's Historic Neighborhoods:

Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods Brochures: Printing the remaining eight in the series of twelve brochures that highlight the historical development and architectural legacy of Boston's neighborhoods.

Washington Street Action Plan: Producing a strategic plan with the BRA and the community to implement physical and economic revitalization along this historical corridor.

Main Streets Program: Instituting the Main Street Program with the Public Facilities Department to revitalize Boston's neighborhoods and encourage economic development.

Demolition Delay: Implementing the new city-wide zoning ordinance providing 90 days to study options to the demolition of buildings that are significant architecturally, historically, or in terms of urban design.

South End Landmark District Street Signs: Completing the installation of special street signs for the city's largest local historical district.

Rangers in the Neighborhood: Interpreting the connection between Boston's environment and its history through new neighborhood based programs to be developed for adults and schoolchildren through a NPS grant proposal.

Preserving Boston's Historic Parks and Open Spaces:

Emerald Necklace Centennial: Celebrating the 100th year anniversary of the completion of the Necklace Park system with infrastructure and landscape projects, including a federally-funded feasibility study to improve the Muddy River.

Boston Common: Fostering of partnerships with neighboring institutions and other stake holders including completion of the Garage and Parade Ground Projects with the Convention Center Authority, and the redesign of the Tremont Street edge with the MBTA.

Expanding Recycling and Reducing Toxics in the Waste Stream:

Recycling: Continuing expansion and improvements to Boston's curbside collection program, with a focus on increasing participation and bringing larger apartment buildings and condominiums on line.

Hazardous and Other Household Wastes: Initiating a Boston automotive materials recycling event on April 22, 1995, to collect and recycle tires, automotive batteries and motor oil. Also, continuing biannual household hazardous waste drop-off days to collect paints, pesticides, and other household chemicals for safe disposal or recycling.

Fall Leaf Composting: Improve marketing to increase public participation in collection and composting of leaves in the fall, and distributing composting material to community gardens and city residents. Providing a series of community workshops to encourage home composting.

Action Agenda for 1995

Improving Water Quality in Boston's Harbor and Rivers:

Combined Sewer Overflow Plan: Completing system improvements to reduce the volume and frequency of CSO discharges to the Charles and Neponset Rivers and to Boston Harbor, the Boston Water and Sewer Commission will work with the MWRA in implementing the final CSO Conceptual Plan.

Illegal Connection Remediation: Removing sanitary sewage connections to storm drains to eliminate untreated sewage discharges to Boston's surface waters.

Stormwater Management Program: Implementing a comprehensive program to eliminate the presence of contaminants in storm drains.

Charles River Watershed Association IM3 Project: Supporting and working with the Association to assess water quality impacts on the Charles River from stormwater runoff.

Pine Neck Creek Storm Drainage System Investigation: Identifying and remediating sources of bacterial contamination that degrade the waters at Tenean Beach.

DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS

Environment Department

Inspectional Services
Department

Boston Water and Sewer
Commission

Transportation Department

Recycling Program
(Public Works Department)

Open Space Planning
(Parks and Recreation Department)

Olmsted System Revitalization
(Parks and Recreation Department)

Grassroots Program
(Public Facilities Department)

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